UCLA Faculty Association

News and opinion from Dan Mitchell since 2009

Thursday, August 7, 2025

Challenge to NSF Freeze

From CalMatters: *A federal judge today ordered lawyers for the Trump administration to explain why last week's suspension of about 300 UCLA grants by the National Science Foundation does not run afoul of that judge's June order barring the agency from terminating additional grants. The California district court judge, Rita F. Lin, set a hearing for Aug. 12. Lin's order is a response to a Monday filing from lawyers representing University of California researchers. They wrote in their filing to Lin that the science foundation must undo last week's suspensions. Their filing is part of an ongoing case that challenged the legality of the National Science Foundation's terminating 114 UC grants this spring over alleged Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion violations. Lin issued a preliminary injunction in June ordering the science foundation to restore the grants and barred the agency from additional terminations.*

Lawyers for the UC professors believe their filing is the first legal challenge to the National Science Foundation's decision last week to suspend UCLA's grants. Federal Department of Justice lawyers representing the science agency argue the suspensions do not violate Lin's June preliminary injunction...

Full story at https://calmatters.org/education/higher-education/2025/08/research-grants-california/.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:05 AM No comments:

Labels: diversity, politics, UCLA

Wednesday, August 6, 2025

Today

Blog readers will know that the UC Regents at their regular meetings often have presentations about the Department of Energy labs - Los Alamos, Lawrence Livermore, Lawrence Berkeley - over which UC has managerial responsibilities. The labs are the remnants of the World War II Manhattan Project, the Project that produced the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima eighty years ago today. The Manhattan Project was linked to UC-Berkeley through its research director, Professor J. Robert Oppenheimer. The film *Oppenheimer* that received much attention a few years back told the story, but in a rather disjointed fashion that assumed at least some audience knowledge of the WW2 period. That was a big assumption for events eight decades ago.

A better source is the BBC docudrama "Oppenheimer," telecast in 1980, from which the image above is taken. You can see its 7 parts - one hour each - at the links below:

https://ia601509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/Oppenheimer_1980_Episode_1.mp4

https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/Oppenheimer_1980_Episode_2.mp4

https://ia601509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/Oppenheimer_1980_Episode_3.mp4

https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/Oppenheimer_1980_Episode_4.mp4

https://ia601509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/Oppenheimer_1980_Episode_5.mp4

The Council of UC Faculty Associations

- Coalition of UC unions condemns Trump's attacks on the UC and the California economy
- Stand up for values in the face of Trump's $300 million cut to UCLA scholars
- Faculty leaders comment on UCB Chancellor Lyon's appearance before House Committee on Education and the Workforce
- CUCFA Opposes AB 715
- Pause Trellix and Form a Working Group to Explore Cybersecurity Solutions

Remaking the University

- The coalition of UC unions condemns Trump's attacks on the University of California and the Californian economy - 8/26/2025
- Liner Note 37. Chicago's Gift to Trump - 8/24/2025
- Liner Note 36. UCLA in the Extortion Machine - 8/10/2025

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https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/Oppenheimer_1980_Episode_6.mp4

https://ia801509.us.archive.org/28/items/sacramento-city-at-risk/Oppenheimer_1980_Episode_7.mp4

Although there is a lot more "content" easily available for viewing now compared with 1980, the BBC series will hold your attention better than most options. And it gives a picture of the political atmosphere at Berkeley in that earlier era.

The NY Times has photos of the aftermath of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs at:

https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/05/world/asia/hiroshima-nagasaki-japan-nuclear-photos.html.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: miscellaneous, UC Regents, UC-Berkeley

Straws in the Wind - Part 62

From Bloomberg: *Christopher Rufo, the conservative activist who has been influential in the White House's efforts to reshape higher education, now wants to expand the campaign well beyond the elite schools that have borne the brunt of the pressure. Rufo says the Education Department is considering a proposal that would ensure all US universities that receive federal funding — the vast majority — adopt many of the same conditions that Columbia University agreed to in a deal this week. He sees the plan, which he first outlined with the Manhattan Institute this month, as a way to swiftly broaden President Donald Trump's higher-education agenda...*

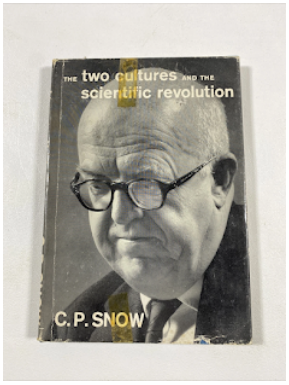
Under Rufo's proposal, schools would be subject to demands including purging their institutions of diversity initiatives or other programs focused on specific minority groups; harsh and swift disciplinary measures for student protesters; the publicization of demographic data in admissions decisions; and hiring conservative faculty. The terms would be baked into universities' contracts with federal agencies for research funding — and, if taken a step further, could be incorporated into the powerful accreditation system that determines colleges' eligibility to receive federal financial aid...

Full story at https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-07-26/christopher-rufo-pushes-for-broader-university-targets-after-columbia-deal.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:

Labels: admissions, Columbia, diversity, politics

The Divide



Back when I entered Columbia as an undergraduate in 1960, the powers-that-be there assigned all incoming freshmen the summer requirement of reading British author C.P. Snow's book, "*The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*." The book had recently appeared at the time and was to be discussed in orientation. Its basic theme was that there was a division in educated circles between the humanities and the sciences and that was a Bad Thing. I suspect the book was assigned in part to justify the basic core requirements at Columbia for at least minimum exposure to both camps.

The other thing that could have been discussed in orientation, but wasn't, was that higher education in the U.S. had undergone a substantial change since World War II, thanks in large part to the Cold War and the demonstration effect of the Manhattan Project - a massive application of science from UC-Berkeley and other major universities - that produced the atomic bomb. (See our other post today on that.) The War also produced the GI bill which sent many people to college outside the traditional elites who otherwise would not have attended.

The launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union added to these changes by suggesting that the U.S. was falling behind the Soviets in the sciences and that something had to be done. And some of what was done was to provide yet more resources to universities. Some came from private foundations. Much came from the federal government. What resulted was a major university system highly dependent on federal resources.

If there was a divide between the sciences and other disciplines based on "culture" when Snow wrote, there is now a divide based on funding. Particularly in the case of universities with medical schools, there are many faculty, researchers, and support staff who are supported directly by research grants, often federal. At UCLA, this division is loosely a north campus/south campus phenomenon.

When the federal government cuts off support, a good chunk of UCLA faces an existential dilemma on purely economic grounds. And a good chunk may at least think they don't. But that division is an illusion if it continues for any substantial time. The "overhead" charges on grants -

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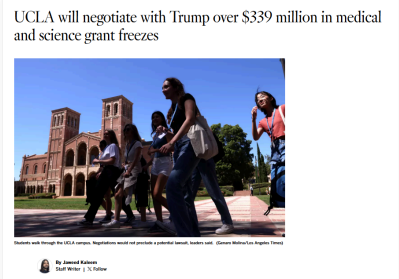
Contributors

- California Policy Issues
- Toby Higbie
- UCLA Faculty Association

that were cut back even before UCLA was specifically targeted - help keep the lights on, the plumbing and landscaping maintained, and the floors mopped. Somebody has to pay for the library, the computer services, mail delivery, etc. And the dispute with the feds comes as the state is squeezing its contribution to the budget.

As we have noted in prior posts, by UC's own figures, direct receipts from the federal government are one third of the budget, even including campuses such as Santa Cruz that don't have medical schools. Any faculty member who has served on CAP or on other major Academic Senate committees knows about this dependence on the feds. That's another way of saying that many faculty do NOT know.

Columbia, as blog readers will be aware, ultimately made a deal with the feds involving payments of $221 million and other concessions. Columbia, however, is a private institution that is not part of a larger system. It is ultimately controlled by a private board of trustees. UCLA is part of the UC system. It is a public institution ultimately controlled by the UC Regents. Among the Regents are *ex officio* elected politicos: the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the assembly, and superintendent of education. In theory, the *ex officio* members could be outvoted by the others. In practice, that won't/can't happen, given UC's dependence on elected state officials for its budget allocation.


UCLA will negotiate with Trump over $339 million in medical and science grant freezes

It's hard to see the Regents settling with the feds with a Columbia-type deal, given the politics of the "blue" State of California. The governor, for example, is engaged in an ongoing non-campaign for president in 2028 and in direct attacks on President Trump. Even if the Regents were inclined to settle, monetary penalties on the order of Columbia's would have to come from somewhere. Where would that be?

If the decision is to litigate, there is the unpleasant reality that the judicial process can be very slow, even if you have a good case. And to the extent that decisions are appealed, they may end up in the hands of a a conservative U.S. Supreme Court. Even if you ultimately win and reverse the current cuts, what about grant renewals in the future? What about new grants upon which UCLA in its current form depends?

It's easy to demand - particularly if you are north of the campus divide - that UCLA eschew any negotiations with the feds on principle and march into court. But as the illustration above shows, UCLA is already negotiating. That train has left the station.* In addition, you are assuming, in making such a demand, that the courts will "fix" the problem in the way you might like. That is an iffy assumption.

There is much that is not known at this point. Do the feds even want a deal of any type? Or is their goal to punish California and just keep the dispute going? If they do have actual terms of settlement, what are they? Do they apply just to UCLA or to UC as a system?

As we noted in a prior post, the chancellor has said there is a contingency plan. But what that plan is has not been revealed. And, indeed, it's not clear whether the plan is having a committee to develop a plan. The chancellor also has been saying that "we are one UCLA." But yours truly still sees divisions that go back to the events of 2023-24. The chancellor will need to get a wide circle of views into his tent. One thing for sure, however, is that a repeat of anything like the events of 2023-24 will not help the situation.

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*https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-08-05/ucla-negotiate-nih-nsf-doe-grant-cuts.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:10 AM No comments:

Labels: Columbia, governor, politics, UC, UC Regents, UCLA

Tuesday, August 5, 2025

Costs Up

As blog readers will know, UnitedHealth is the provider of UC's Medicare Advantage option for retirees. In fact, at one time, there was talk of dropping the other options for Medicare Advantage. But the outlook doesn't look so bright. From the NY Times:

UnitedHealth Group, the giant health care conglomerate, said on Tuesday that it continued to struggle with the higher-than-anticipated costs to provide medical care to patients, reporting a drop in earnings for the quarter that ended June 30... The increased costs were felt across the company's vast health operations, including one of its most successful businesses, selling private Medicare plans as an alternative to traditional Medicare. UnitedHealth owns the nation's largest health insurer, UnitedHealthcare, which covers 50 million people.

In the earnings report, released before the stock market opened, UnitedHealth officials offered a detailed look at the company's rising medical expenses. Executives emphasized the significant gap between what the company had anticipated it would cost to care for the patients enrolled in its plans...The gap was particularly stark in its private Medicare business, called Medicare

Advantage. In addition to selling Medicare Advantage plans, UnitedHealth is a large supplier of plans offered by employers to their workers. The company also sells health plans available through the Obamacare insurance markets and Medicaid.

...In discussing the company's Medicare operations, [a spokesperson] described what he called "a generational pullback in Medicare funding," largely the result of a crackdown in what regulators viewed as overbilling by the insurers for certain health conditions. In addition to its intention to increase its prices, UnitedHealth said it planned to discontinue some of its plans and would most likely shift to selling plans that give patients a narrower choice of hospitals and doctors as a way of controlling costs...

Last week, the company confirmed the Department of Justice was investigating its Medicare operations...

Full story at https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/29/health/unitedhealth-earnings-profits.html.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: health care, UC, uc retirement

Straws in the Wind - Part 61

From NOLA.com: *Louisiana will join other Southern states that are developing a new accrediting agency for public colleges and universities, Gov. Jeff Landry said..., echoing a conservative complaint that existing accreditors have imposed liberal values on the institutions they evaluate... In April, President Donald Trump said some accreditors "abused their enormous authority" by requiring schools to meet standards related to diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI. Last month, Florida's Republican governor, Ron DeSantis, said the public university systems in Florida and five other Southern states — Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas — will create a new accreditor to compete with the "accreditation cartel." ...Landry signed an executive order creating a task force to explore adopting that new accreditor, which he said will offer "an alternative to the out-of-touch accreditation system."*

"This task force will ensure Louisiana's public universities move away from DEI-driven mandates and toward a system rooted in merit-based achievement," he said in a statement...

Full story at https://www.nola.com/news/education/jeff-landry-university-accreditor-dei/article_6650fbae-2b6a-4ed8-9f60-bb268a8e450f.html.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:

Labels: diversity, politics

Will Harvard Continue to Lead the Charge? - Part 41

From CBS News-Boston: *International students at Harvard University are scrambling to get their visas before the start of the fall semester in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Some have run into last-minute roadblocks. Repha Uhuru was planning on starting classes at Harvard's Graduate School of Education next week. She told WBZ-TV that her dream was cut short Monday, July 28, when her visa was denied at the Nairobi Embassy, following an interview that including questions about her finances and martial status. "I said, 'I'm not married, I'm a widow.' So, the next thing I heard was 'Unfortunately, you are not qualified for the visa this time around,'" Uhuru said.*

She said she was given a document that said she didn't show enough ties to her home country of Kenya, despite having a son and family there. "So, maybe according to them, I was not going to come back to Kenya," she said. Another Harvard graduate student from Kenya, Magaga Enos, is trying to help Uhuru get to campus. His grandmother sacrificed everything, including her land and cows, to get him to Harvard's Graduate School of Education. His future was uncertain as President Trump and the university continue to fight it out, but he made it to Cambridge. "My family is overjoyed. They're so happy, they're celebrating," Enos said. "It's not easy. There is so much of emotions invested in this because there are so many unknowns."

Uhuru has her next visa interview on Tuesday, August 12. "I'm really hoping for the best," she said.

Source: https://www.cbsnews.com/boston/news/harvard-university-student-visas-kenya/.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:10 AM No comments:

Labels: diversity, Harvard, politics

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